

Request for Public Comment: Proposed Funded Priorities List (FPL) Amendment for Comprehensive Plan Commitment and Planning Support

The Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council (Council) is seeking public comment on a proposed amendment of its [2017 Funded Priorities List: Comprehensive Plan Commitment and Planning Support](#) (2017 CPS FPL) to provide staffing for the maintenance of the Gulf of Mexico Long-Term Monitoring Network Inventory (Monitoring Inventory) database and web services. This inventory was developed as part of the Council Monitoring and Assessment Program funded under the [Council's 2015 Initial Funded Priorities List](#), and is sponsored by the U.S. Department of Commerce/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (DOC/NOAA).

This funding for this amendment is available by reallocating funds previously approved in the [2017 CPS FPL](#). The 2017 CPS FPL approved up to \$2.1M over five years to each Council member to conduct planning, partner collaboration, and other related activities in support of meeting commitments made in its [2016 Comprehensive Plan Update: Restoring the Gulf Coast's Ecosystem & Economy \(2016 Comprehensive Plan Update\)](#). The Council realized cost-savings in conducting these activities that may be redirected to provide support for the Monitoring Inventory, thus eliminating the need to apportion new funds from the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Trust Fund (Trust Fund). Specifically, the Council is proposing to approve providing DOC/NOAA \$125K to continue support for the Monitoring Inventory for 12 months. This amount would be in addition to the existing award of \$2.1M for DOC/NOAA to conduct other activities allowed under the 2017 CPS FPL.

Before voting on whether to approve funding, the Council is publishing this FPL amendment for a 15-day public comment period beginning on June 17, 2020 and concluding at 11:59 pm (CST) on July 2, 2020. You may submit comments via email to restorecouncil@restorethegulf.gov. Email submission of comments ensures timely receipt.

Please note: All comments received, including names, email addresses, attachments and other supporting materials, will be part of the public record and subject to public disclosure. You should only submit information that you wish to make publicly available.

Gulf of Mexico Long-Term Monitoring Network Inventory Background:

Pursuant to the RESTORE Act (33 U.S.C. §1321 (t)), the Council is responsible for administering portions of Deepwater Horizon oil spill settlement funds for the purpose of restoring the environment and economy of the Gulf coast. The Council administers two

funding programs, one of which is the Council-Selected Restoration Component, or “Bucket 2.” Under Bucket 2, the Council votes to approve Gulf ecosystem restoration projects and programs proposed by the Council members. Bucket 2 projects and programs approved for funding by the Council are included in what is referred to as a Funded Priorities List (FPL).

The Council Monitoring and Assessment Program approved for funding under the Council’s [2015 Initial Funded Priorities List](#) helped to build a foundation for Gulf of Mexico-wide monitoring that supports the Council’s commitment to make science-based decisions, evaluate restoration effectiveness (incorporate lessons learned into management as needed), and meet its reporting obligations. This program built a comprehensive inventory of existing water quality and habitat monitoring, and mapping programs, to understand existing monitoring efforts across the Gulf. Taking full advantage of past work undertaken by the Gulf States, federal and local partners, academia, and non-governmental/non-profit organizations across the Gulf may provide significant cost efficiencies for the restoration planning and assessment efforts of the Council and its member agencies. In turn, the Monitoring Inventory has supported other vital Council activities, including, but not limited to:

- Building a catalogue of existing baseline water quality, habitat and mapping assessments;
- Providing a reference for identifying common parameters and program elements that would support consistencies in Council-funded monitoring activities;
- Performing an information gap assessment; and
- Creating a georeferenced web tool that provides access to all inventoried program information.

The key to maintaining the value and applicability of the Council’s initial investment is to keep the Monitoring Inventory database and the associated tools for discovery up-to-date, ensuring the continued accessibility of collected information. Therefore, the Council is proposing to provide financial support for the continuity of technical support to maintain monitoring program information and ensure efficient updates and enhancements to the Monitoring Inventory.

Maintaining the currency of the available data for each program, including points of contact, relevant internet-based resources (e.g., URLs), and substantive program updates (e.g., changes in sampling frequency, location, and/or methods) is critical to the overall utility of this information to Council members and their ability to take advantage of existing data and future data collection efforts in the Gulf of Mexico.

To learn more about the RESTORE Council visit us at www.restorethegulf.gov or send questions to restorecouncil@restorethegulf.gov.